

14. Ezra and Nehemiah in the Light of the Texts from Persepolis

Between the years of 1931 and 1939 a major excavation of Persepolis, one of the capitals of the Achaemenid empire, was undertaken by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.¹ During the course of these excavations, many discoveries of texts were made, of which three are of particular concern to us here. The first and largest group to be unearthed was found initially by accident during the third season (1933), when E.E. Herzfeld was still leader of the excavation. 'When leveling debris for the construction of a road, Herzfeld discovered great numbers of cuneiform tablets in the northeastern remnants of the Terrace fortification.'² These 'remnants' proved to have been a bastion on the northern edge of the terrace, the tablets being located in its southeastern portion.³

In 1935, when E.F. Schmidt had succeeded Herzfeld as director, work was begun on the Treasury, and here in 1936 a further, though much smaller, group of tablets was found in Room 33.⁴ Finally, principally in Hall 38 of the Treasury, a number of (probably) ritual objects, such as pestles, mortars and plates, were

discovered. Made of a hard green stone known as (impure) chert, and usually highly polished, many of these objects were found to have Aramaic inscriptions written on them.⁵

Although the three groups of texts, and especially the fortification and treasury tablets, share a number of points in common, it is important to distinguish carefully their individual characteristics.

Most obviously distinctive is the small group of about 200 texts in Aramaic (not all legible). Cameron was the first to study these texts, and he came to the conclusion that they referred to the delivery of the objects on which they were written at Persepolis.⁶ Bowman, however, to whom was entrusted the publication of the material,⁷ rejected this conclusion in favour of the view that they described the objects' use in the religious *haoma* ceremony. Subsequent study has vindicated Cameron's basic approach,⁸ so that although several differences of opinion, to say nothing of a number of obscurities, remain in the realm of detail, the general approach that should be taken to these texts is now agreed. For instance, instead of Bowman's translation of text no. 18:

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| בסרך בירתא ליד מתרך סנא | 1) In the ritual of the fortress,
beside Mithra the <i>sega</i> , |
| בנפשת / עבר סחר ונה רב | 2) I Bago-paušta used this plate, a large one, |
| [ליד בנפת גנוברא קדם מזודת] | 3) [beside Ba]ga-pāta the treasurer (and)
before Mazda-dāta |
| /// /// /// ר שנה' אשכר אפגנוברא | 4) the sub-treasurer. 'škr of year 19 |

¹ The following special abbreviations should be noted: AD = G.R. DRIVER, *Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford, 1957); AP = A. COWLEY, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford, 1923); BMAP = E.G. KRAELING, *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri* (New Haven, 1953); CHI = I. GERSHEVITCH (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran. Volume 2: The Median and Achaemenian Periods* (Cambridge, 1985); PFa = R.T. HALLOCK, 'Selected Fortification Texts', *Cahiers de la Délégation Archéologique Française en Iran* 8 (1978), 109-36; PFT = R.T. HALLOCK, *Persepolis Fortification Tablets* (University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications, 92; Chicago, 1969); PTT = G.G. CAMERON, *Persepolis Treasury Tablets* (University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications, 65; Chicago, 1948). In all cases where these abbreviations refer to collections of texts, the references in what follows are to the number of the text cited unless otherwise stated.

² E.F. SCHMIDT, *Persepolis I. Structures, Reliefs, Inscriptions* (The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications, 68; Chicago, 1953), 3; cf. E.E. HERZFELD, *Iran in the Ancient East* (London, 1941), 226. See more popularly E.F. SCHMIDT, *The Treasury of Persepolis and Other Discoveries in the Homeland of the Achaemenians* (Chicago, 1939).

³ SCHMIDT, *Persepolis I*, 40.

⁴ Ibid. 4 and 173-74; see also N. CAHILL, 'The Treasury at Persepolis: Gift-Giving at the City of the Persians', *AJA* 89 (1985), 373-89. Aspects of CAHILL's interpretation of the treasury's function have been challenged by C. TUPLIN ('The Administration of the Achaemenid Empire', in I. CARRADICE [ed.], *Coinage and Administration in the Athenian and Persian Empires* [BAR International Series, 343; Oxford, 1987], 109-66, esp. 139).

⁵ SCHMIDT, *Persepolis I*, 181 ff.; E.F. SCHMIDT, *Persepolis II. Contents of the Treasury and Other Discoveries* (The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications, 69; Chicago, 1957), 53-56.

⁶ Cf. G.G. CAMERON in SCHMIDT, *Persepolis II*, 55.

⁷ R.A. BOWMAN, *Aramaic Ritual Texts from Persepolis* (University of Chicago Oriental Publications, 91; Chicago, 1970).

⁸ For reviews that support this, see especially J.B. SEGAL, *BSOAS* 35 (1972), 354-55; PH. GIGNOUX, *RHR* 181 (1972), 86-87; J.R. HINNELL, 'Religion at Persepolis', *Religion* 3 (1973), 157-60; R. DEGEN, *BibOr* 31 (1974), 124-27; for studies, see P. BERNARD, 'Les mortiers et pilons inscrits de Persépolis', *Studia Iranica* 1 (1972), 165-76; B.A. LEVINE, 'Aramaic Texts from Persepolis', *JAOS* 92 (1972), 70-79; W. HINZ, *Neue Wege im Altpersischen* (Göttinger Orientforschungen, III/1; Wiesbaden, 1973), 43-52; J. NAVEH and SH. SHAKED, 'Ritual Texts or Treasury Documents?' *Orientalia* ns 42 (1973), 445-57; J.A. DELAUNAY, 'À propos des "Aramaic Ritual Texts from Persepolis" de R.A. Bowman', *Acta Iranica* 2 (1974), 193-217; I. GERSHEVITCH, 'An Iranianist's View of the Soma Controversy', in PH. GIGNOUX and A. TAFAZZOLI (eds.), *Mémorial Jean de Menasce* (Louvain, 1974), 45-75, especially 52-54 and 69-71; W. HINZ, 'Zu den Mörsern und Stösseln aus Persepolis', *Acta Iranica* 4 (1974), 371-85; K. KAMIOKA, 'Philological Observations on the Aramaic Texts from Persepolis', *Orient* 11 (1975), 45-66; W. VOGELSANG, 'Early Historical Arachosia in South-East Afghanistan', *Iranica Antiqua* 20 (1985), 55-99, esp. 82-86. I regret that M.N. BOGOLJUBOV, 'Aramejskie nadpisi ne ritual'nyh predmetah iz Persepolja', *Izvestija Akademii Nauk SSSR, Serija Literatury i Jazyka* 32 (1973), 172-77, is not accessible to me.

we should probably translate along the lines:

- 1) In the fortress of Sārūka,⁹ (which is) under the authority of¹⁰ Mithrakā the prefect,¹¹
- 2) I Bago-pašta handed over¹² this plate, a large one,
- 3) under the authority of /to (or 'made for') Baga-pāta the treasurer in the presence of Mazda-dāta
- 4) the sub-treasurer (as) tribute/a gift¹³ of year 19.

The texts are dated to the years 479/78–436/35 BC or perhaps a little later, during the reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes I, so that they overlap with the work of Ezra and Nehemiah on a traditional dating.

By far the largest group of texts, of which over two thousand have been published to date,¹⁴ are the so-called fortification tablets, which date from the earlier period of 509–494 BC. Being written in Elamite,¹⁵ they are by no means

⁹ Three words with the preposition *b* stand in this initial position: *prkn, srk*, and *lšt*. BOWMAN related them to his ritual interpretation (e.g., *prkn* = '(haoma)-crushing ceremony'), but others all find an indication of place, as suggested by comparable formulae with *b ... byrt* in other texts (so frequently, *inter alia*, in AP and BMAP; the most recent example is reported to be in the as yet unpublished Samaria Papyri 4:1, where *šmryn byrt* stands in an equivalent position to *šmryn gryt* at 14:1; this shows that 'fortress' is not a fully satisfactory translation of *byrt*; cf. F. M. CROSS, 'Samaria Papyrus 1: An Aramaic Slave Conveyance of 335 B.C.E. found in the Wādi ed-Dāliyah', *Erlsr* [1985], 7*–17* [11* with nn 9 and 10]); A. LEMAIRE and H. LOZACHEUR, 'Birāh/birā' en araméen', *Syria* 64 (1987), 261–66. Whereas LEVINE, GERSHEVITCH and DELAUNAY argue that reference is to rooms within the palace or treasury, BERNARD and especially HINZ ('Zu den Mörsen') have advanced strong arguments for finding here three place names in the eastern part of the empire known as Arachosia, itself mentioned several times in these texts (e.g., 9:4; 13:4; 19:4; 43:6). It will have been in this region that the objects were made before being sent to Persepolis. KAMIOKA's compromise suggestion, that these are place names in the vicinity of Persepolis ('Philological Observations', 60–61) has nothing to commend it.

¹⁰ For this meaning of *lyd*, cf. AD iv 1.

¹¹ The plural is familiar from Dan 2:48; 3:2, 3, 27; 6:8. In BOWMAN 2:2, *rb* has apparently been added secondarily after *sgn*, making an interesting parallel with Dan 2:48.

¹² Or 'made', Aram. *'bd*. Uncertainty over the precise significance of these texts remains because of the double use of *lyd*. Both occurrences could mean 'under the authority of', or the second might mean more simply 'to' or 'for'.

¹³ BOWMAN thought that *'škr* meant 'intoxicant', though he regularly left it untranslated. For the now generally accepted association with Akkadian *iškaru*, either as 'finished products, staples, or material to be delivered' or as some kind of tax (CAD 7, 244–49), cf. LEVINE, 78, and for criticism of BOWMAN in this regard, cf. KAMIOKA, 52–54.

¹⁴ Cf. PFT and PFA; it appears from PFT (I) that there are over three and a half thousand tablets in all. It should also be noted that an unspecified number of texts in Aramaic from the same source remain unpublished. For introductory studies, cf. R. T. HALLOCK ('The Evidence of the Persepolis Tablets', *CHI* 588–609); J. M. COOK (The Persian Empire [London, 1983], 85–90); D. M. LEWIS ('Postscript', in A. R. BURN, *Persia and the Greeks: the Defence of the West*, c. 546–478 BC [London, 1984], 587–609). For a major effort to integrate the evidence from these texts with that of other sources relating to the geographical divisions and tribute of the empire, cf. TUPLIN ('The Administration of the Achaemenid Empire'), and for historical geography cf. W. M. SUMNER ('Achaemenid Settlement in the Persepolis Plain', *AJA* 90 [1986], 3–31).

¹⁵ I freely admit to knowing no Elamite; this aspect of the present study is based on the

perfectly understood, but the number of them, together with the degree of overlap between one text and another, means that there is no doubt about the general situation. For the most part they record receipts or payments in kind for a variety of purposes. Their discovery in the 'fortifications' of Persepolis is an explicable accident of history¹⁶ which has no bearing on the fact that they give us a direct insight into various aspects of administration at one of the Achaemenid capital cities.

The situation with regard to the treasury tablets is not dissimilar. Published in a variety of works by G. G. CAMERON,¹⁷ they date from 492–458 BC. The chief difference from the fortification tablets is that payments are now made in cash rather than in kind.

So far as I can tell, this wealth of material has largely been ignored by biblical scholars, and even occasional references that may be found in commentaries¹⁸ hardly do justice to their potential. In what follows I cannot, of course, attempt fully to remedy this situation. The most I can set out to achieve is to draw attention to the relevance and scope of this material, in the hope that others with the necessary linguistic skills may be able later to refine what will, I fear, be seen in retrospect as a very crude comparison.¹⁹

translations of HALLOCK and CAMERON, together with the published comments of the other specialists in that field. The linguistic position is probably in any case complicated by the peculiar circumstances of having Elamite scribes to record business which was basically conducted in Old Persian; cf. I. GERSHEVITCH, 'The Alloglottography of Old Persian', *TPS* (1979), 114–90.

¹⁶ SCHMIDT linked the dates of the tablets with the phases in the development of the building of the treasury (Persepolis I, 41–42). He believed that the original treasury was completed at about the time when the series of fortification tablets begins, so that it cannot be deduced that there were no administrative texts, since lost, at an earlier time. Later, the treasury was twice expanded, the date of the first of these expansions coinciding with the break between the fortification and the treasury tablets. 'We believe that the fortification tablets had been removed – sometime after 494/93 B.C. – from their original archives to be stored (or discarded) in rooms of the fortification' (41). He further argued that the cessation of the treasury tablets indicated another change in the location of the administration, though others have argued that at that time the scribes went over to making their records (presumably in Aramaic) on perishable material; cf. W. HINZ, 'Zu den Persepolis-Tafelchen', *ZDMG* N.F. 35 (1961), 236–51. R. T. HALLOCK further believes that the use of Aramaic on perishable material accounts for the many gaps in even what we do have of the archive ('The Persepolis Fortification Archive', *Orientalia* ns 42 [1973], 320–23).

¹⁷ PFT; see also G. G. CAMERON, 'Persepolis Treasury Tablets Old and New', *JNES* 17 (1958), 161–76; 'New Tablets from the Persepolis Treasury', *JNES* 24 (1965), 167–92.

¹⁸ E.g., R. A. BOWMAN, *IB* 3, 613; J. M. MYERS, *Ezra, Nehemiah* (AB, 14; Garden City, 1965), 43, 51, referring quite reasonably to the association attested between archives and treasury (*Ezra* 5:17; 6:1). On this, see now J. C. GREENFIELD, 'Aspects of Archives in the Achaemenid Period', in K. R. VEENHOF (ed.), *Cuneiform Archives and Libraries* (Leiden, 1986), 289–95.

¹⁹ The comments of D. M. LEWIS in his pioneering work on bringing this material to the attention of classicists are appropriate in our context too; he writes of the new evidence that 'although it seldom bears directly on the points which principally concern us, (it) nevertheless

Towards the conclusion of my 1987 Tyndale Biblical Archaeology Lecture,²⁰ I made a start on this comparison by suggesting six ways in which the Persepolis material could help forward our understanding of Neh. 5:14–19. I shall not repeat that discussion here, but will provide rather an introduction to three more general topics – language, religion, and travel – while emphasizing once more that this is far from an exhaustive survey.

A. Language

We may begin by noting, then, that despite the geographical distance which separates Arachosia from Judah, there are several points of contact between the language of the Aramaic texts from Persepolis and that of Ezra and Nehemiah. This is due, of course, to the fact that both reflect the current language of Persian administration, and to that extent little is added to what was already known or strongly surmised from other sources. Thus, for instance, we have the regular opening of the texts with *b* + place name + *byrt*, 'in the fortress of X', to set alongside *b^e alim^e itā bⁱrtā* of Ezra 6:21 and the Hebrew *b^ešāšan habbⁱrtā* of Neh 1:1; the official title *gnzbr*,²² 'the treasurer', to compare with Hebrew *haggizbār* at Ezra 1:8 and the Aramaic plural *gizzabrayyā* at Ezra 7:21; the use of the anarthrous *kl* in the summary of a list,²³ which may help explain the unusual Hebrew *kol-kēlīm* at Ezra 1:11;²⁴ and the use of PN + *šmh* (literally, 'his name') to mean 'a man named PN', exactly like *šēšbaššar šē mēh* at Ezra 5:14.²⁵

less sometimes suggests new approaches', Sparta and Persia (Cincinnati Classical Studies, ns 1; Leiden, 1977), 3.

²⁰ 'The Governors of Judah under the Persians', TynB 39 (1988), 59–82 (see above, 46–63). To the literature cited there, there should now be added TUPLIN, 'The Administration of the Achaemenid Empire', and D. M. LEWIS, 'The King's Dinner (Polyaenus IV 3,32)', in H. SANCISI-WERDENBURG and A. KUERT (eds.), Achaemenid History II. The Greek Sources: Proceedings of the Groningen 1984 Achaemenid History Workshop (Leiden, 1987), 79–87.

²¹ For the omission of *b* before *byrt* as a dittograph, cf. W. RUDOLPH, *Ezra und Nehemia* (HAT, Tübingen, 1949), 54.

²² A loan-word from Old Persian *ganžabara*, not previously attested in Aramaic with retention of the *nun*, but cf. Late Babylonian *ganžabaru*; CAD 5, 43.

²³ Misunderstood as a proper name by BOWMAN, 94:3 and 95:3; see rather SEGAL, 354; NAVEH and SHAKED, 453; and HINZ, 'Zu den Mörsern', 378. One should compare the regular use of PAP, 'total', to similar effect in many of the Elamite texts.

²⁴ For the suggestion that the inventory and its heading in Ezra 1:7–11 are based on an Aramaic original, see my *Ezra, Nehemiah* (WBC, 16; Waco, 1985), 7.

²⁵ Both Persian and Akkadian origins can be proposed for this idiom; cf. BOWMAN, p. 66, and DELAUNAY, 206 f. It was already misunderstood by the Greek versions as well as by some more modern commentators; cf. L. W. BARTEN, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah* (ICC; Edinburgh, 1913), 140: 'its omission seems necessary', an opinion still tentatively favoured by A. H. J. GUNNEWEG, *Ezra* (KAT; Gütersloh, 1985), 100. Dr. W. HORNBURY has suggested to me that *šēmō* in Zech 6:12 may be an example of the use of the same idiom in Hebrew.

Although we should not, therefore, expect any major new advance of understanding in this area, there are nevertheless a few matters, of which we will here consider three examples, concerning which our texts can add clarification.²⁶ To take first the idiom just referred to, Clines has observed that it 'is found regularly in contemporary papyri in reference to slaves', from which he concludes that 'the possibility must be considered that he (Sheshbazzar) was a high-ranking Babylonian official of slave status.'²⁷ Hinz, however, has made out a strong case for the suggestion that those so designated in the Persepolis texts were wealthy nobles in the area of the three named fortresses who regarded it as a privilege to supply the vessels needed for the periodic festival at Persepolis.²⁸ If he is right, then, of course, no deductions can be drawn from the use of this idiom about the social status of the individuals concerned.²⁹ We might surmise that it was used rather in cases where the individual was unknown personally to the recipient of the document,³⁰ for in our texts it is striking that it is only used in connection with the donors of the vessels, whose names are hardly ever repeated, but never in connection with the various officials, whose names recur frequently and who would have been known to others in the state bureaucracy. This would also, of course, readily explain its use with slaves – and with Sheshbazzar in the context presupposed by Ezra 5:14.

Second, light can be shed from these texts on the troublesome 'eben g^elāl' referred to in connection with the building of the temple at Ezra 5:8 and 6:4, and which has generally been translated into English by 'large stones' or the like.³¹ A number of other translations have been proposed, however, among which we

²⁶ For some examples of refinements to, or support for, views already held about, for instance, 'uššarnā' (Ezra 5:3, 9), 'šetar bōz^ehay' (Ezra 5:3; 6:6), 'niš^e wān' (Ezra 4:7; 7:11), and especially 'tiršāitā' (Ezra 2:63; Neh. 7:65, 69; 8:9; 10:2), cf. HINZ, *Neue Wege im Altpersischen*, 39–45.

²⁷ D. J. A. CLINES, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther* (NCB; Grand Rapids and London, 1984), 87, citing AP 28:4; BMAP 5:2, 4; 8:3; AD 5:2–3; 8:1; 9:1. Without reference to the case of Sheshbazzar, this explanation of the idiom's significance had already been advanced by KRAELING, BMAP (145, 208). The idiom is attested most recently in J. B. SEGAL, *Aramaic Texts from North Saqqāra* (London, 1983), 5:1; 9:3; 17:1; 29:3, 6; 55a:4; 60:4; 63:2, 3; and in the Samaria Papyrus 1:2 (cf. Cross, 'Samaria Papyrus I') and in a reconstructed part of papyrus 2; cf. F. M. Cross, 'A Report on the Samaria Papyrus', VTSup 40 (1988), 17–26.

²⁸ Cf. HINZ, 'Zu den Mörsern', 380: 'adlige Herren und Grundbesitzer im Bezirk der drei Festungen Parikāna, Sārūka und Hasta ... Vermutlich gehörte diese besondere Abgabe zu den Ehrenpflichten jener iranischen Gutsbesitzer, die zugleich dem Reichsheer als Offiziere zu dienen hatten.'

²⁹ In fact, CLINES's theory might already have been found questionable in light of, for instance, AP 33.

³⁰ I have subsequently discovered that this suggestion has already been advanced by E. Y. KUTSCHER ('New Aramaic Texts', Hebrew and Aramaic Studies [Jerusalem, 1977], 37–52, esp. 40, 45).

³¹ AV, RV: 'great stones'; RSV: 'huge stones/great stones'; ASB: 'huge stones'; NEB: 'massive stones'; JB: 'blocks of stone/stone blocks'; GNB: 'large stone blocks'; but note now the JPS version, 'hewn stone'.

may notice most recently the suggestion that the reference is to cobble or rubble fill in connection with what is known as pier-and-rubble construction.³²

In something like a quarter of the Aramaic texts from Persepolis, the objects described are said to be *zy gll*, which Bowman translates 'of stone'. In some cases, a further modifier is added, varying from one text to another. Sometimes an adjective is used, and on other occasions another noun joined by *zy*. The meaning of these words is uncertain, but the suggestion that the first group refers to something like colouring or patterning and the second to the type of stone seems reasonable.

On the basis of this material, together with the evidence collected concerning Akkadian *galālu* for the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary,³³ Bowman wrote an article in 1965 arguing, *inter alia*, that (i) a distinction should be drawn between *galālu* (and some later Aramaic uses of *gll*) meaning 'pebble', 'cobble', and the many passages in Akkadian of the Persian period where such a meaning is inappropriate; he reckoned Ezra 5:8 and 6:4 among the latter; (ii) because of the variety of objects described by *gll* (including stelae, pillars, window frames and dishes), *gll* cannot refer to either the shape or type of stone: it 'should be translated simply as "stone", without further specification' (67); (iii) the use of *'bn* should be regarded as a determinative; whether or not *gll* once had a more specific meaning, by the time of Ezra, with or without the determinative *'bn*, it simply meant 'stone'.³⁴

Although Bowman's article is a helpful collection of material and is certainly moving in the right direction, its conclusion nevertheless raises two particular difficulties. First, Aramaic is not Akkadian, and to speak of *'eben* as 'a determinative' is inappropriate. It is simply not a usage that would have been recognized by Aramaic speaking Jews in Judah. Whatever its history, the phrase must have meant something more to them than just 'stone', for which *'eben* alone would have sufficed. Secondly, Delaunay³⁵ has argued that 'stone' is also inappropriate for *gll* in the Persepolis texts on the ground that it would be superfluous, and even absurd, so to qualify certain vessels when in fact they are all made of stone in any case. (It should be remembered, however, that the Persians were obsessed with bureaucratic pedantry, so that Delaunay's objection may not be so strong as

³² Cf. L. E. STAGER, 'The Archaeology of the Family in Ancient Israel', BASOR 260 (1985), 1-35, esp. 13; for the method of construction, cf. E. STERN, 'The Excavations at Tel Mevorach and the Late Phoenician Elements in the Architecture of Palestine', BASOR 225 (1977), 17-27, and Excavations at Tel Mevorach (1973-1976) (Qedem 9; Jerusalem, 1978), 71-75.

³³ CAD 5, 11.

³⁴ R. A. BOWMAN, ^{לבל} *galālu* - *aban galālu* (Ezra 5:8; 6:4), in I. T. NAAMANI and O. RUDAVSKY (eds.), *Dōrōn. Hebraic Studies. Essays in Honor of Professor Abraham I. Katsh* (New York, 1965), 64-74; see also Aramaic Ritual Texts, 44-45; IB 3, 610.

³⁵ DELAUNAY, 'A propos', 204f.

at first appears.) Delaunay thus returns to a proposal of Herzfeld³⁶ that, in accordance with the root meaning of *gll*, the reference is to turning or polishing, and so work that might attract extra remuneration.

This suggestion seems to fit the varied uses of both *gll* and *galālu*, and one may well imagine how it could come to be used without the pedantically correct use of *'eben*, 'stone', with it; compare, for instance, how we regularly speak of 'hardback' and 'paperback' without thereby implying that either is the exact equivalent of 'book'. Bowman seems to have fallen into the trap of asserting that 'all *gll* is *'bn*, therefore all *'bn* is *gll*'. Thus 'dressed/hewn/polished stone' seems appropriate for the Biblical occurrences.

A final line of support for this understanding may come from an Aramaic gloss on one of the fortification tablets. PFT 1587 is translated by Hallock, '185 (BAR of) grain, supplied by Hatarbanus, Ramakka received. It was taken (to) Persepolis (for) rations of makers of stone (sculptures). Second month, ... th year'. The Aramaic gloss reads *rmk ybl prs ptp lmqry gll*, and is translated (apparently by Bowman; cf. PFT, p. 82) 'Ramakka brought (it to) Persepolis, (for) rations of diggers of stone'. The Elamite text, however, as Hallock's bracketed explanation suggests, implies something more than just quarrymen, for which other terms are used (cf. PTT 9); the word in question translated 'makers' is elsewhere used with such other finished products as wine and oil. The Aramaic translation *nqr* can reasonably fit with this, for although in all the cognate languages the root can have the meaning 'to quarry, bore',³⁷ it is also used, both in Aramaic and Akkadian, for carving stone or the like. Indeed, when it is thought by Bowman to occur in a very damaged text on one of his mortars (no. 160), he translates 'chiseled(?)', and comments, 'The word *nqrwr* may be from the root *nqr* meaning "to chisel", "to shape stones by chiselling", "to whet a millstone"'.³⁸ It may be suggested that here again the evidence is best explained if *gll* means not just 'stone', but stone that has been worked in some particular manner.

A final area where our texts may help towards a better understanding of the vocabulary of Ezra and Nehemiah derives, strangely enough, not from the Aramaic texts at all, but the Elamite.³⁹ Not infrequently in the records of payments in kind to some individual, there is reference also to what Hallock

³⁶ DELAUNAY refers only to the citation of HERZFELD's views *apud* SCHMIDT, Persepolis II, 55, n. 68; cf. E. HERZFELD, *Altperische Inschriften* (Berlin, 1938), 100.

³⁷ Cf. CAD 11, 329-32; BDB, 669; PAYNE SMITH, 352.

³⁸ Aramaic Ritual Texts, 185, with reference to M. JASTROW, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babil and Yerushalmi*, and the Midrashic Literature (New York and Berlin, 1926), 935a.

³⁹ A further potential example from this source is unfortunately inconclusive in the present state of knowledge. Elamite *baribara* (PFT 107:7; 161:7-8; 586:3-4 and 995:3-4) probably represents Old Persian **paribāra*, whence the enigmatic Hebrew loan-word *par-bār/parwār* (2 Kgs 23:11; 1 Chron. 26:18). However, the meaning of *baribāra* is disputed; cf. I. GERSHEVITCH in HALLOCK, PFT, p. 675, and W. HINZ, *Orientalia* ns 39 (1970), 436.

translates as his 'boys' (*puhu*); for instance, we are told concerning Parnaka, a well-known senior official, that 'Daily (by) Parnaka together with his boys 48 BAR is received. (By) Parnaka himself 18 BAR is received. (By) his 300 boys 1 QA each is received'.⁴⁰ There is a good deal of evidence, however, that 'boy' is a reference to status rather than age. For instance, though rations vary, theirs are often as much as an adult male,⁴¹ they receive rations of wine, they do 'men's' work, and occasionally are even referred to in the same text as 'men' (*ruh*).⁴² It thus looks as though *puhu* has a similar semantic range as Hebrew *na'ar* in Nehemiah 4 and 5 (and 13:19; perhaps also at 6:5), where the *ne'arim* are clearly a group who owe particular and personal loyalty to Nehemiah (or whoever).⁴³ And since it is clear from the Persepolis texts that their rations or salary were a designated fraction of their master's, we may perhaps understand better why, after complaining about the heavy burdens that his predecessors as governor had laid upon the people in terms of both cash and kind, Nehemiah adds, 'Even their *ne'arim* lorded it over the people' (Neh. 5:15).



B. Support of Local

At Ezra 6:9–10 and 7:17–20 we are told that Darius I, and later Artaxerxes I, gave instructions that material support should be given by the empire for the regular sacrifices in the Jerusalem temple. Earlier skepticism about the likelihood of such support was countered most effectively by de Vaux,⁴⁴ who was able to adduce several examples of Achaemenid concern for the continuation of local cults, no doubt partly in order that they might be able effectively to pray for 'the life of the king and his sons' (Ezra 6:10; cf. Jer. 29:7; AP 30:25–26; and the

⁴⁰ PFa 4, lines 8–16. 10 QA = 1 BAR, 1 QA being roughly equivalent to a quart (cf. PFT, p. 72).

⁴¹ Cf. PFT, pp. 29–30, and R. T. HALLOCK, 'A New Look at the Persepolis Treasury Tablets', JNES 19 (1960), 90–100, esp. 93–94; for references, compare especially the figures throughout PFT, 847–994. In 1239–69, boys generally receive 1 QA, as do a horseman (1244, 1266–68), servants (1258, 1262, 1264 and 1265) and some others (1260).

⁴² These last three points are all illustrated by PFT 1137; see also variously (as examples only) PFT 47, 58, 72 and 77; Hinz, *Neue Wege im Altpersischen*, 72–74; H. KOCH, 'Zu den Lohnverhältnissen der Dareioszeit in Persien', in H. KOCH and D. N. MACKENZIE (eds.), *Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte der Achaemenidenzeit und ihr Fortleben* (Berlin, 1983), 19–50, esp. 21.

⁴³ For discussion of *na'ar* with further bibliography, cf. my Ezra, Nehemiah, 227–28, and add L. E. STAGER, BASOR 260 (1985), 25f.

⁴⁴ R. DE VAUX, 'Les décrets de Cyrus et de Darius sur la reconstruction du temple', RB 46 (1937), 29–57 = 'The Decrees of Cyrus and Darius on the Rebuilding of the Temple', *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (London, 1972), 63–96.

Cyrus Cylinder, ANET 316), and today most commentators accept that there is little difficulty in principle with the biblical statement.⁴⁵

The Persepolis fortification tablets lend strong support to this conclusion and illuminate some of the practicalities involved. PFT 303, 336–77 and 2029–30 record delivery of various goods for use in the service of a number of different named and unnamed gods; for example, '7 (BAR of) grain, supplied by Bakamira, Anbaduš received, and utilized (it) for (the god) Humban. 22nd year' (PFT 340). Within the region covered by these texts, the following are some of the gods mentioned: Ahuramazda, Humban, Mišduši, Mithra, Šimut, Pirdakamiya, Turna, Mariraš, Narišanka and Adad.⁴⁶ Here we have Persian, Elamite and Babylonian gods all being honoured by their separate devotees within a circumscribed area, and all being supported equally by funds from the imperial treasury.⁴⁷ Viewed in this light, the addition of another god to whatever list may have been supported by the treasury of 'Beyond the River', specifying the quantities to be supplied, need have surprised nobody.

The commodities listed as being supplied for the gods are grain, wine, flour, beer and *tarnu* grain, which at first sight overlaps only very partially with the biblical lists. Quite apart from the fact that naturally the needs of the individual cults concerned will have had to be considered, there are other reasons why this dissimilarity need not worry us unduly; to appreciate this, however, each piece of evidence needs to be considered in its chronological and religious context.

First in time comes Darius' order that 'whatever is needed – young bulls, rams, or sheep for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine or oil, as the priests at Jerusalem require – let that be given to them ...' (Ezra 6:9). As noted, there is no direct parallel for this, because it is so much earlier than our other sources, but in principle it is not unreasonable in the light of what we have already seen.

Second come the fortification tablets, and here it is of interest to observe that the grain rations could quite openly be used for the purchase of sheep for sacrifice. For instance:

80 (BAR of) grain, supplied by Mamannuwiš, Ururu the priest received and delivered, and in its stead he received 8 sheep, and utilized (them) for the gods.

⁴⁵ GUNNEWEG emphatically rejects the authenticity of the documents in Ezra 6 and 7, but nevertheless adds with regard to 6:10: 'Daß tatsächlich – in der historischen Faktizität – die persische Zentralregierung die Wiederherstellung von Tempel und Kult gestattete und anordnete, ist damit nicht bestritten, das ist vielmehr als sehr wahrscheinlich anzusehen' (110).

⁴⁶ For a fuller list with discussion, cf. H. KOCH, *Die religiösen Verhältnisse der Dareioszeit: Untersuchungen an Hand der elamischen Persepolistafeln* (Göttinger Orientalforschungen, III/4; Wiesbaden, 1977), and 'Zur Religion der Achämeniden', ZAW 100 (1988), 393–405. KOCH also includes among the Babylonian gods the Sumerian KI, 'the earth', but this seems more likely to be an ideogram for the Elamite earth-god.

⁴⁷ Cf. M. DANDAMAEV, 'La politique religieuse des Achéménides', *Acta Iranica* 4 (1975), 193–200, and P. BRIANT, *Rois, Tributs et Paysans* (Paris, 1982), 225, n. 398a.

2 sheep for (the god) Adad, 2 sheep for the shrine (?), 2 sheep for (the place) Tikrakš, 2 sheep for (the place) Hapidanuš, total 8 yearling sheep, were issued (at) the granary (?) (PFT 352; cf. 362–64 and 2030).

A possible reason for this cumbersome procedure is suggested by Hinz,⁴⁸ who sees in it a somewhat artificial means whereby a Zoroastrian, who of course could not accept animal sacrifice in any shape,⁴⁹ was nevertheless able to support a cult in which such sacrifice was normal. The date at which, if at all, or to what extent, the Achaemenids embraced Zoroastrianism is a highly contentious issue,⁵⁰ but a move in that direction between the early years of Darius I and the period of the fortification tablets is not unreasonable, and could explain the difference between them and Ezra 6. Alternatively, grain may simply have been used as the basic unit of currency in the treasury, with the system of reckoning up for animals in terms of grain in place from the start, in which case there is no real development to be detected between the two periods.

Next in order come the treasury tablets which, while not dealing directly with support for local cults, are relevant here because of their testimony that for a number of years up until the time of Ezra payment in kind was being supplemented, if not replaced, by payment in silver in the imperial treasuries.⁵¹ And this, then, leads straight back, fourthly, to the text of Ezra 7:15–20, where Ezra is given cash to enable him to buy both animals and other materials for the sacrificial cult. The different manner in which these grants were paid to the Jews by Darius and Artaxerxes is thus neatly explained by factors which we could only have learned about from the two collections of Elamite texts from Persepolis which come in between.

Four other smaller matters also deserve mention here. First, several of these texts specify a particular ceremony for which the supply is made; for instance, '3 *marriš* (of) wine, supplied by Parsauka, Mardonius the priest received, and (utilized it for) the divine *tamšiyam* (ceremony) of (the god) Humban. (At) Urutukaš. 23rd year' (PFT 348). The meaning of *tamšiyam* is uncertain, but Hallock himself favours the suggestion of I. Gershevitch, which he reports as follows: 'it is to be connected with Av. *zaoša-*, "pleasure". Thus it would represent OP **daušiyam*, a neuter adjective used as a substantive, meaning

⁴⁸ W. HINZ, 'Die elamischen Buchungstafelchen der Darius-Zeit', *Orientalia* ns 39 (1970), 421–40, esp. 427–30.

⁴⁹ As is well known, this is often advanced as the explanation for the omission (if not indeed deletion; cf. B. PORTEN, 'Aramaic Papyri and Parchments: A New Look', BA 42 [1979], 74–104, esp. 99) of *w'lw*, 'and burnt offering', from AP 32:9 by comparison with 30:25 (and see also 33:10–11), but other explanations are possible.

⁵⁰ For a recent survey, cf. M. SCHWARTZ, 'The Religion of Achaemenian Iran', CHI 664–97, with further bibliography on pp. 916–18; see also H. KOCH, 'Zur Religion der Achämeniden'.

⁵¹ Though apparently resort was made to this mode of payment particularly in times of shortage, such as in 467–466 BC, treasury payments of this kind are attested as late as 458 BC, the probable year of Ezra's commission; cf. R. T. HALLOCK, 'A New Look', 91.

"what serves for satisfaction, propitiatory offering" (19). If this is so, then one may more readily understand how so very 'Jewish' a word as *nyhwlyn*, 'pleasing sacrifices, soothing offerings', could be included in Darius' decree at Ezra 6:10.⁵² It is generally believed that Jewish scribes would have had a hand in drafting such a document.⁵³ It was a happy coincidence for them that they could pass off one of their most technical items of cultic vocabulary as though it were the Aramaic equivalent of a ceremony better known in Achaemenid circles.

Second, PFT 741–74 record rations paid to individuals who exercised religious functions, for instance: '12 (*marriš* of) wine, supplied by Mišabadda, Harima received (for) performing (?) the *lan* (ceremony at) Harbus. It was given to him as rations by the king, (for) a whole year. 23rd year' (PFT 753).⁵⁴ This may be set alongside Ezra 7:24, where Artaxerxes orders the treasurers in Beyond the River: 'Be it further known to you that you have no authority to impose tribute, tax, or dues upon any of the priests and Levites, the musicians, gatekeepers, temple servants, or (other) servants of this house of God'. The specific mention of support for officially recognized cultic officials is thus common to both contexts, and this further undermines Weinberg's attempt to argue that the community as a whole was exempt from tax.⁵⁵

Third, most of these rations to individuals engaged in religious functions are given for a specified period, as in the text just cited, and as in this further typical example: '12 *marriš* (of) wine, supplied by Parnizza, Kurka the Magus, the *lan* performer (?) (at) Marsaškaš, received (for) the libation of the *lan* (ceremony). From the sixth month through the fifth month, total 12 months, (starting in?) the 17th year' (PFT 757). The time involved in the grants recorded in Ezra is not specified, but on the basis of the quantities involved the suggestion has been advanced that the allowance at Ezra 7:22 was intended to last for two years.⁵⁶ Some such limitation certainly seems plausible in the light of our texts.

Finally, alongside Ezra 6:9, in which it is stated that the necessary supplies are to be given them 'day by day', a phrase often attributed to the Chronicler, it is worth setting a text such as PFT 748, where concerning the allocation of a ration of beer for the *lan* ceremony we are told, '(For) a period of 12 months he received (for) 1 month 3 *marriš*. Daily he receives 1 QA' (lines 7–11). It was

⁵² Contrast the doubts expressed by, for instance, C. C. TORREY (The Composition and Historical Value of Ezra-Nehemiah [BZAW, 2; Gießen, 1896], 10, and Ezra Studies [Chicago, 1910], 158, 194).

⁵³ Cf. P. FRÉI, 'Zentralgewalt und Lokalaufonomie im Achämenidenreich', in P. FRÉI and K. KOCH, *Reichsidee und Reichorganisation im Perserreich* (OBO, 55; Freiburg and Göttingen, 1984), 7–43.

⁵⁴ The significance of the *lan* ceremony is discussed by H. KOCH ('Zur Religion der Achämeniden').

⁵⁵ J. P. WEINBERG, 'N^etinim und "Söhne der Sklaven Salomos" im 6.–4. Jh. v. u. Z.', ZAW 87 (1975), 355–71, esp. 367–68.

⁵⁶ Cf. RUDOLPH, Ezra und Nehemia, 75, citing A. BERTHOLET, *Theologie des AT II* (1911), 30 (not available to me).

clearly not unusual for an allowance to be made for an extended period but for it to be released on a day-by-day basis.

C. Travel and Transportation

There are several accounts in Ezra and Nehemiah of journeys between Babylon and Jerusalem, included in which there is reference to the transportation of specified items for the temple or city. Ezra 1:7–11 includes an inventory of the temple vessels, and concludes, 'all these did Sheshbazzar bring up, when they of the captivity were brought up from Babylon to Jerusalem'. Ezra 8 comprises a fuller account of Ezra's journey, again with a list of valuable items transported, but this time with the details of the accounting procedures at both the start and the conclusion of the journey. Finally, in Nehemiah 2 we are told how Nehemiah travelled with a smaller party from Susa to Jerusalem carrying letters to various officials requesting both a safe conduct on the journey and materials for rebuilding after his arrival. Although a number of other such journeys are mentioned or presupposed by the narrative,⁵⁷ these three provide the most detail for comparative purposes.

The texts from Persepolis contain a great deal of information which can be treated as background against which to read these various accounts. Because they are not narrative documents, it is necessary to combine information from different groups of texts in order to build up a composite whole. There is admittedly a danger of misrepresentation in this procedure, but this is partly offset by the number of texts at our disposal which helps to develop a reasonably rounded picture.

The first point to be made is the simple observation that without question the Achaemenid bureaucracy went to enormous lengths to record carefully all manner of payments and receipts at the central treasuries. Hallock's A texts (PFT 1–57), for instance, record details of the transport of commodities in the sense of how they were taken away from a given centre; they are thus comparable to a receipt by the bearer; for example, '22 (BAR of) barley loaves (?)', supplied by Bakabada, was taken to Persepolis for the (royal) stores. 24th year' (PFT 3). The B texts (PFT 58–137), on the other hand, record how commodities were delivered to a given centre; they are thus comparable to a receipt by the recipient to the bearer. As a brief example, '22 (BAR of) *tarmu* (grain) Sunkišip took, and delivered (it at) Tandari. Hapikra received (it). 24th year' (PFT 114). Other

⁵⁷ For instance, it is generally supposed that there was more than a single journey of return during the period 538–520 BC; Ezra 4:6, 7 and 8–23 refer to three exchanges of letters between Beyond the River and the court, while Ezra 5–6 includes details of a further similar exchange. Nehemiah 13:6–7 refers to a further journey in each direction by Nehemiah.

collections of texts deal with tax receipts and other deposits, payments of salaries and making provision for special officials and for royal occasions, payments of allowances to mothers who have just had babies, travel rations and the like.

These texts were not just receipts, however, but were clearly used as part of a broader accounting procedure. One group of texts (PFT 233–58) is accounting balances, noting the total amount that was being 'carried forward as balance', and sometimes a note of the date on which the calculation was made; for instance, '9,502 (BAR of) grain has been carried forward (as) balance, entrusted to Bakasūta, (at) Liduma. In the 22nd year, twelfth month, the accounting was done' (PFT 240). Finally, in PFT 1961–2014 there are longer and more elaborate accounting texts itemizing payments and receipts and balances brought or carried forward. The treasury texts too, though somewhat different in nature, demonstrate not dissimilar concerns, while the Aramaic texts remind us that sometimes special items which had been supplied (under whatever circumstances and for whatever purpose) could be individually marked with all necessary detail.⁵⁸

In this context, it should come as no surprise to find the detailed care attested in the biblical texts enumerated above regarding procedures of payments and receipt. To Sheshbazzar an itemized list was brought out and counted over by the treasurer (Ezra 1:8), while in Ezra's case the items were first weighed out by Ezra to specified individuals (8:25–27) who then in turn weighed them out to other officials on their arrival in Jerusalem.⁵⁹ 'everything was checked by number and by weight and the total weight was recorded in writing' (Ezra 8:34). Indeed, by now we should have learned from Persepolis to expect nothing less.

The formula used when noting such payments, attested at Ezra 1:8, has already been compared with AP 61, but a further point of comparison comes now from the Aramaic texts at Persepolis. As was seen above, there are at least two levels of authority involved with the manufacture or delivery of the items in question, one introduced by *lyd*,⁶⁰ the other by *qdm*. The latter is used only with the sub-treasurer (*pguzbr*), and is probably to be understood as indicating that he was personally present when the vessel was made/made over. The other indicates only more generally under whose authority the work was done. In Ezra

⁵⁸ It is tempting here to compare the 'two vessels of brightly gleaming copper as precious as gold' of Ezra 8:27. We should note that in the Aramaic texts the size is often mentioned, and occasionally even the measurements, reading *lpty 'yb'n X* ('x fingerbreadths wide') at 43:4; 73:5; 114:3, with DEGEN, 126, NAVEH and SHAKED, 455, HINZ ('Zu den Mösern', 385) *et al.*, against BOWMAN's original idea that these words indicate the value of the vessel (which would then have been comparable with Ezra 8:26).

⁵⁹ PFT 388 provides a good parallel to this record of accounting both before and after transportation: '130 (BAR of) *šē.grg.lg* (grain), supplied by Bakubeša, Teispes received, and took (it to the place) Zila-Umpan. Tiriya received (it), and utilized (it) for the royal food supply (?). 19th year.'

⁶⁰ In fact this is used both with the prefect (*sgn*) and with the treasurer. It is not clear whether the vessels were made 'under the authority' of both these officials, or whether in one case *lyd* should be translated rather as 'made over' to'; see above, n. 12.

1:8, when we are told that Cyrus brought out the temple vessels by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer who then counted them out to Sheshbazzar, we should probably see a similar procedure, Cyrus himself, of course, not being personally responsible for bringing out the vessels.

Despite all the care that went into these recording and accounting procedures, mistakes were sometimes made. These usually involve a mistake in the numbers concerned, the causes being anything from a simple slip to more serious miscalculations in accountability. For example, at PFT 661 we seem to have a simple error of 6 for 8; at 855 a slip in the list (23 for 32) has led to an error in the final total; at 864 the total (228) is out by one in the tens unit, but in 1023 the total (88) is out by one in the ones unit; in 1011 a figure in the body of the list is out by a factor of one, but in 1028 by a factor of ten. Sometimes, it is possible to trace how an error has arisen. At PFT 865 the scribe put only one month's ration total instead of the three months that the account was for; at 932 a line has been left out accidentally as the scribe's eye jumped from one figure of 15 to the next (paralepsis); at 860 Hallock tells us that an erasure left some signs undeleted even though the scribe wrote his new text over the top – it is not difficult to imagine that a later copyist, when drawing up a combined account, might have been led into error as a consequence; PFT 259–66 involve large quantities of wine together with some kind of fractional charge or deduction. In his discussion Hallock (15) sets out the somewhat complicated procedure by which this deduction is calculated, but even then, when applying his results to the related account text 2006 two errors of figures have additionally to be conjectured. Finally, an occasional glimpse allows us to see why such miscalculations might have occurred. PFT 77 reads:

12 'cowhides' of camels, 7 'cowhides' of yearling camels, 2 'cowhides' of camel calves (?), total 21 'cowhides', supplied by Takmašbada, Šandupirzana received. Included among these 'cowhides' (were) 2 *aššana*. They were received (in) the ninth month, on the first day, 24th year.

It is not difficult to see how the two 'included' items could be misunderstood as additional by a careless scribe.

It has long bothered commentators that we are faced with errors of similar kinds in some of the lists in Ezra and Nehemiah. For example, there are differences between some of the figures in what purports to be the same list in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7, and neither there nor in Ezra 1:11 do the totals equal the sum of the parts. Not a few of these discrepancies can be accounted for on the basis of the system of numeral notation probably used at some stage in the transmission of the text,⁶¹ but that does not account for every case. It is thus reassuring

⁶¹ H. L. ALLRIK, 'The Lists of Zerubbabel (Nehemiah 7 and Ezra 2) and the Hebrew Numeral Notation', BASOR 136 (1954), 21–27.

ing to find that the sources which may lie behind the biblical text are no worse off than the products of the royal scribes and accountants at Persepolis.

A substantial group of over 300 of our texts (PFT 1285–1579; 2049–57; cf. 1780–87; 1942: 19–22; 1953: 34–35) deal with the provision of rations for travellers, and contain several matters of interest for us. We learn of journeys by both small and large groups of workers and others over shorter and longer distances. Kandahar, India, Arachosia, Babylon, Sardis and Egypt, for instance, are all mentioned as starting points or destinations. The rations referred to, however, are generally only sufficient for a single day (1 or 1½ QA of flour per person), from which it has been not unreasonably deduced that there must have been supply stations at single day's journey intervals along the major routes of the empire.⁶²

The authorizing and accounting system appears to have operated as follows: the leader of each group of travellers was given some kind of document (of which more below) by the king or other senior official, authorizing him to draw so much each day in the way of rations from the supply stations. Each time he did this, a document such as those that we have was drawn up by an official at the supply station and sent to Persepolis. There, the commodities issued will have been credited to the account of the supply station by debiting the account of the official who had issued the authorizing document.⁶³

There are two words for this kind of authorizing document: *halmi* is usually translated 'sealed document', and Cameron suggested that it might be a loan-word from Aramaic *hṭm*.⁶⁴ The other is *miyatukkam*, which is thought to derive from Old Persian with some such meaning as 'authorisation',⁶⁵ so that semantically the two words are not far removed from each other. They seem to be used more or less interchangeably.

Sadly, no example of such an authorizing document has survived at Persepolis, partly, no doubt, because they would often have been written in Aramaic on papyrus or parchment. It has been suggested by Benveniste,⁶⁶ however, that AD 6 is just such a document, for in it Arsames, the satrap of Egypt who is temporarily on leave back home in Babylon, writes to various of his subordinates along the way to Egypt, commanding them to provide daily rations for Neṭiḫur, his officer. In Driver's translation, the first five lines read:

From Aršam to Marduk the officer who is at ..., Nabū-dalāni the officer who is at La'ir, Zātōhi the officer who is [at] 'Arzūḫin, 'Upastabar the officer who is at Arbel, Ḥalšu

⁶² Cf. PFT 6, 40.

⁶³ Ibid., and BRIANT, Rois, Tributs et Paysans, 208–9.

⁶⁴ CAMERON, PTT, p. 53, with justification for the phonetic shift involved; R. T. HALLOCK, 'New Light from Persepolis', JNES 9 (1950), 237–52, esp. 247–48.

⁶⁵ PFT, pp. 40, 733–34.

⁶⁶ E. BENVENISTE, 'Notes sur les tablettes élamites de Persépolis', JA 246 (1958), 49–65, esp. 63–65; see also LEWIS, Sparta and Persia, 6.

(?) and Māt-âl-Ubaš (?), Bagafama the officer who is at Sa'lan, Frādafama and Gavazāna (?) the officers who are at Damascus.

And now: – behold! one named Neḥtiḥur, [my] officer, is going to Egypt.

Do you give [him] (as) provisions from my estate in your provinces every day two measures of white meal, three measures of inferior (?)⁶⁷ meal, two measures of wine or beer, and one sheep, and for his servants, 10 men, one measure of meal daily for each, (and) hay according to (the number of) his horses; and give provisions for two Cilicians (and) one craftsman, all three my servants who are going with him to Egypt, for each and every man daily one measure of meal; give them these provisions, each officer of you in turn, in accordance with (the stages of) his journey from province to province until he reaches Egypt ...

Clearly, some distinction needs to be drawn between this text and the *halmi* of the Persepolis tablets on account of the fact that Arsames refers only to his personal estates, not the more official supply stations, but in general the comparison drawn by Benveniste seems apposite.

Turning with these introductory remarks on the travel ration texts to a comparison with the biblical data, several points stand out:

(1) Both Ezra (Ezra 8:36)⁶⁸ and Nehemiah (Neh. 2:8–9) took with them letters from the king authorizing the payment of certain grants for their work. While these cannot be equated with the documents carried by the travellers in the Persepolis tablets, since they do not refer to supplies for the journey, they would doubtless have functioned in exactly the same way. Indeed, it may be wondered whether the unusual use of an Old Persian loan-word at Ezra 8:36 (*dāte hammelek*; in Hebrew elsewhere only in Esther) may not be intended precisely as the equivalent of *miyutukkam*.⁶⁹

(2) In addition, Nehemiah requested that he be given letters 'addressed to the governors of Beyond the River so that they may grant me a safe conduct until I reach Judah' (Neh. 2:7). These too are likely to have been recognizable in the same class as the *halmi*.

(3) Ezra's letters are addressed 'to all the treasurers of Beyond the River' (Ezra 7:21). In the light of the administrative structures probably to be deduced from the Aramaic texts considered above, we may say that these are likely, strictly speaking, to have been 'subtreasurers' (*pgnzbr*), who were actually responsible for making the payments, and who operated under the authority of

the treasurer of the satrapy.⁷⁰ The plural *ḥašdarp⁶nē hammelek*, 'the royal satraps', at Ezra 8:36, remains a puzzle, however.⁷¹

(4) According to the figures supplied in the biblical text, Ezra's caravan will have numbered approximately 1,500 men, and we are not told how many women and children accompanied them. Nehemiah's group, of course, was much smaller, though he had an armed escort with him. It is unlikely, in my opinion, that the list in Ezra 2 is intended to describe a single caravan, but it is rather a summary of all in the land by 520 BC, including some who had not been in exile.⁷² We cannot, therefore, say anything about the size of the first parties which returned.

Travelling parties of many sizes are attested in our texts, and since more than 72 percent of the dated texts come from only two years it must be assumed that such travelling companies were by no means an uncommon sight on the empire's highways. PFT 1532, for instance, speaks of 2,454 gentlemen, and no. 1527 of 1,150 workers,⁷³ though the majority of texts deal with smaller numbers.

(5) With regard to Nehemiah's armed guard (and Ezra's refusal of such an escort) we may observe that a number of titles of uncertain meaning crop up in these texts which Hallock tentatively associates with those who might have accompanied the caravans. We should note especially the 'elite guide' (literally, 'safe-keeper'), and his comment that 'Persons with this title... are involved particularly with groups of foreigners, for whom special guidance and protection would be required' (42). In addition, as is probably attested by these texts, and as is already known from other sources,⁷⁴ there were mounted couriers, who must have been armed, moving rapidly from one station to the next, as well as many other travellers. Whatever risks he took, Ezra is certainly not to be pictured as leading his party through totally deserted and trackless wastes.

(6) Part of Ezra's anxiety was doubtless caused by the fact that he was transporting gold, silver, and valuable vessels for the temple (Ezra 8:25–27). In this connection, it is hard to resist citing PFT 1342, even though it is not fully understood: '8 BAR (of) flour (was) supplied by Karna. Mannuya the treasurer took silver from Susa, and went to Matezziš. 2 gentlemen daily received each

⁷⁰ See also HALLOCK, CHI, 592–95. It has been calculated that there were at least 19 treasuries in the Persis/Elam region outside Persepolis itself; cf. TUPLIN, 'The Administration of the Achaemenid Empire', 130, with reference to H. KOCH, "Hofschatzware" und "Schatzhäuser" in der Persis', ZA 71 (1981–82), 232–47; cf. also W. HINZ, 'Achämenidische Hofverwaltung', ZA 61 (1971), 260–311.

⁷¹ See most recently T. PETTIT, 'L'évolution sémantique des termes hébreux et araméens *plh* et *sgn* et accadiens *pāliatu* et *šaknu*', JBL 107 (1988), 53–67.

⁷² Cf. Ezra, Nehemiah, 28–32.

⁷³ Indeed, Lewis, Sparta and Persia, 6–7, goes so far as to speak of 'people moving round in large ethnic groups' and of 'a whole population transplanted', though this needs to be read carefully in its historical context.

⁷⁴ Cf. HALLOCK, CHI, 606–7.

⁶⁷ HINZ (Neue Wege im Altpersischen, 40) proposes a Persian derivation for this word with the meaning 'fine'.

⁶⁸ I have suggested at Ezra, Nehemiah, 98 that the essential text of these 'letters' is included in Artaxerxes' edict at 7:21–24.

⁶⁹ Note the possible support for this semantic equivalent in the remarks of I. GERSHENVITCH, 'miyutukkam "authorization": *yy-ā-duga-, a neuter noun belonging to the OP fem. *han-duga*- "proclamation, declaration (or sim.)"?', Iranian Nouns and Names in Elamite Garb', TPS (1969), 165–200, esp. 177. HINZ, however, suggests that it represents OP *viyāika, meaning 'a pass', comparing Old Indian *viyāti*, 'travel through', with the characteristic OP -ka ending (Neue Wege im Altpersischen, 39–40).

1½ QA. Ninth (Elamite) month, (for) a period of 16 days, 22nd year'. There are several unusual points about this text: we do not normally find references to someone of the rank of treasurer among the travellers; nor to the transportation of silver (but cf. PFT 1357 and PFa 14); nor are the rations ever for so long as 16 days.⁷⁵ It is clearly tempting to assume that these three factors are somehow related, but it remains strange that Mannuya did not make all haste to deposit his silver safely. Did he have to wait for an escort, or until the road had been made safe? Perhaps there is a hint that Ezra had good cause to pray earnestly for a safe journey and to give thanks after his arrival in Jerusalem.

(7) Finally, in view of both Ezra 2:66–67 and Neh. 2:9, it is worth pointing out that animals (especially horses) are sometimes included in these texts as receiving rations,⁷⁶ and indeed that PFT 1780–87 relate exclusively to rations for animals on journeys (e.g., PFT 1785: '17.4 BAR [i.e., 17 BAR, 4 QA] (of) grain, Miramana received for rations, and gave (it) to horses of Abbaema, (as) rations (for) 2 days. He carried a sealed document of the king. 19 horses, 1 received 3 QA. And 15 mules, 1 received 2 QA. In the second (Elamite) month, 23rd year').

D. Conclusion

In drawing these remarks to a close, it is worth reminding ourselves that the chronologically restricted testimony of the Persepolis tablets is probably an accident of history, and that the type of administration which they reflect will have lasted throughout the years of the Achaemenid empire.⁷⁷ There can thus be no objection to comparing them closely with Ezra and Nehemiah, with which we have seen they demonstrate some striking points of contact. Furthermore, as in the case of Neh. 5:14–19, dealt with on a previous occasion (see above, n. 20), the biblical passages referred to here have tended to be clustered in concentrated sections, despite the more thematic nature of the discussion. Not surprisingly, it will be found that these are passages which deal with points of closest contact between the Persian administration and the Jewish leaders. To

⁷⁵ Nearly all are for one day, a few for two days; above that, HALLOCK (43) lists one tablet each relating to three days (1344), four days (1311), six days (1408), seven days (2057), and ten days (1395).

⁷⁶ See, for instance, PFT 1397: '29 (BAR of) flour, supplied by Mirizza, Karabba the Indian, sent forth from the king (to) India, received for rations, (for) 1 day (in) the third month, 24th year. He himself received 2 QA. 180 'people' (passengers?) received each 1½ QA. 50 boys received each 1 QA. 3 horses consumed each 3 QA. 3 mules consumed each 2 QA. He carried a sealed document of the king'.

⁷⁷ Cf. especially BRIANT, Rois, Tributs et Paysans, 208 ft., and above, n 16.

that extent, our discussion has not only illuminated some obscurities in our texts, but has also shown how well they fit into their purported setting.

On the other hand, it is important to be careful not to try to prove too much from such comparisons. There is still a great deal of uncertainty surrounding the detailed understanding of these texts, some of the points raised above could well be coincidental, and it may be assumed that government practices were as well known to storytellers as to historians. Nevertheless, when due allowance has been made, it remains the case that the more we learn of the system of Persian rule, the more the objections of an earlier generation of scholars to the substantial authenticity of the accounts in Ezra and Nehemiah may be seen to have been unwarranted; and with that we must remain content.

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